

Ambassador's Welcome Remarks
Reagan Centennial Dinner in Honor of Cardinal Dziwisz

Dobry wieczór!

To dla mnie zaszczyt, że mogę wziąć udział w kolacji na cześć kardynała Stanisława Dziwisza. Od czasu śmierci Papieża Jana Pawła II w 2005 roku kardynał kontynuował jego świadectwo – świadectwo prawdy, wolności, godności człowieka i wzajemnego szacunku.

Eminencjo, jesteśmy wdzięczni za to duchowe przywództwo.

[We are here this evening to honor Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz. Since the Pope's death in 2005, Cardinal Dziwisz has carried forth John Paul II's legacy – advancing truth, freedom, human dignity, and mutual respect. Your Eminence, we are grateful for your spiritual leadership and we are honored by your presence.]

Jestem również zaszczycony, że na dzisiejszą uroczystość przyjechała dziesięcioosobowa delegacja członków Izby Reprezentantów amerykańskiego Kongresu, między innymi:

- kongresmen Kevin McCarthy, członek kierownictwa republikańskiej większości w Izbie Reprezentantów
- oraz przewodnicząca Komisji Spraw Zagranicznych Izby Reprezentantów Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

Ich obecność na uroczystościach z okazji setnej rocznicy urodzin Ronalda Reagana w Krakowie i w innych miastach Europy w tym tygodniu pokazuje, jak silne jest dążenie wspólnoty transatlantyckiej do upragnionej wizji Europy – w końcu zjednoczonej, wolnej i pokojowej.

[We are also honored to have ten Members of Congress, including House of Representatives Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy and the Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. Their attendance at Reagan Centennial events in Krakow and throughout Europe this week shows the transatlantic community's commitment to achieving, at long last, our shared vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace.]

Ogromnie się cieszę, że jest dziś z nami również Minister Jacek Michałowski. Jacek, bardzo Ci dziękuję, że chociaż jesteś bardzo zajęty, zmieniłeś plany, by do nas przyjechać.

[I am especially delighted that Minister Jacek Michałowski is with us this evening. Jacek, thank you for rearranging your busy schedule to be with us this evening.]

Jacek's life work demonstrates a passionate commitment to the ideals Ronald Reagan championed. An underground activist, he went on to help build the Polish Senate from the ground up and later managed the Polish-American Freedom Foundation's programs to share Poland's transformation experience with neighbors to the East.

The fact that we are celebrating Ronald Reagan's 100th birthday in Kraków – this would have been utterly unimaginable 30 years ago – underscores the historic nature of the change that Polish underground activists fought so valiantly to achieve. Throughout the Cold War, students, intellectuals, and workers in and around Krakow played a leading role in the anti-communist resistance. Today, the city's universities and industries are working with similar energy to build an increasingly influential and prosperous Poland. Mayor Majchrowski, you and your city have much to be proud of. Thank you for hosting us this evening.

I'd also like to thank John Heubusch of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation for organizing this impressive and fitting tribute to the memory of President Ronald Reagan, who has been adopted by Poles as one of their own – a freedom-loving patriot who understood that the world is a better and safer place when the gift of freedom is widely shared.

The biggest ovation I have received as Ambassador was when I quoted Ronald Reagan at the celebration of Solidarity's 30th anniversary in Gdańsk.

Many Polish friends and colleagues in Warsaw have asked me how a Democrat can invoke the memory and legacy of a Republican President. In response, I have pointed out that this is the nature of American democracy. President Reagan's devotion to the cause of freedom reflects America at its best.

The timing of President Reagan's election in 1980 was fortuitous. A few years earlier the Vatican's College of Cardinals had chosen Karol Wojtyła as Pope. And in 1980, inspired by that new Pope's triumphant return to his homeland, a small group of brave shipyard workers in Poland won the right to strike and to organize an independent trade union.

Over the next decade, President Reagan and Pope John Paul II worked together as protectors and champions of the Solidarity movement. Their names will be forever linked with communism's demise and with Central and Eastern Europe's largely peaceful transition.

President Reagan and Pope John Paul II's cooperation also created a framework for the future. Today, America has no better friend than Poland. We work together to spread democracy from Belarus to Benghazi and beyond. Poland has shown the world that peaceful transitions to democracy are possible. It is fitting and appropriate that we are gathered in Poland to celebrate the victory that started here.

During his visit to Warsaw last month, President Obama thanked Poland for its leadership in promoting democracy around the world, both by serving as an example and by sharing its experience to show a pathway for modernization and democratic reform.

Today, Poland is not just a member, but a leader, in NATO and the European Union, and one of the United States' closest allies. President Reagan', perhaps more than anyone, is the reason why Polish-American relations are so relevant and resilient today, and why our two peoples remain so strongly resolved to sharing the blessings of liberty around the world.

Eminencjo, chciałbym na koniec szczególnie podziękować za to, że Ksiądz Kardynał działa na rzecz wolności i godności człowieka, a także za zaangażowanie Księdza Kardynała w umacnianie więzi między Polską a Stanami Zjednoczonymi.

Dziękuję.

[Your Eminence [Cardinal Dziwisz], I'd like to conclude by thanking you in particular for your work in support of freedom and human dignity, and for your commitment to strengthening ties between Poland and the United States.

Thank you.]